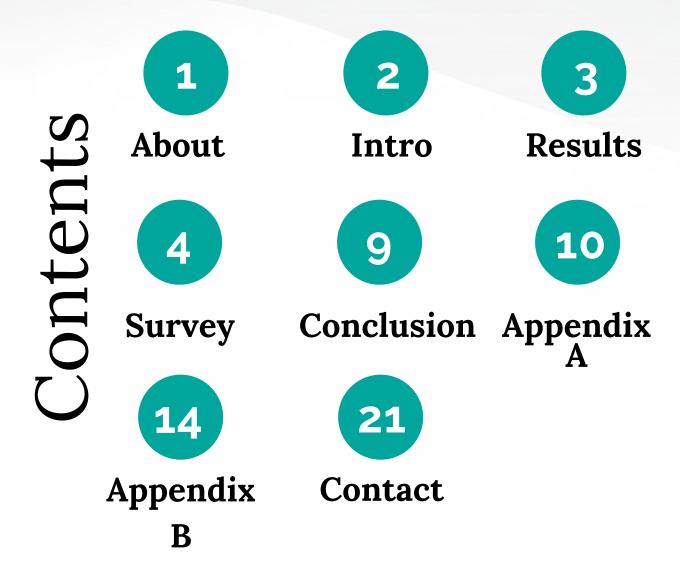


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ABOUT THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress ("Modernization Committee") is a bipartisan, twelve-member committee led by Chairman Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Vice Chairman William Timmons (R-SC). The Select Committee was established to investigate, study, make findings, hold public hearings, and develop recommendations to modernize Congress. One of the Committee's directives, as set forth in the resolution that established the Committee, is to develop recommendations on "staff recruitment, diversity, retention, and compensation and benefits." To that end, through a series of **hearings**, **listening sessions** with staff, and other forums, the Select Committee has developed and passed a series of staffing-related recommendations since being established at the start of the 116th Congress (see Appendix A for full list). In fact, several of these staffing-related recommendations have already been implemented including:

- Creating a one-stop shop <u>Human Resources</u>
 <u>HUB</u> for Member, committee, and leadership
 staff.
- Making permanent the <u>Office of Diversity and</u> <u>Inclusion</u>.
- Delinking staff pay from Member pay and establishing a <u>new cap specific to staff</u>.





INTRODUCTION

Congress attracts talented and hardworking staff, but retention can be a challenge. According to the latest House of Representatives

Compensation and Diversity Study, average tenure for staff in Member offices is 2.5 years in their current position, and 4.2 years in the House of Representatives. In committee and leadership offices, staff tenure averages 2.7 years and 6.3 years, respectively. When staff leave, offices can lose valuable policy and procedural expertise, leaving more junior staff who are often juggling multiple responsibilities at once and needing to play "catch up" on the issues of importance to the district.

Research [1] has found that most staff do not see Congress as a long-term career option and do not feel their experience is adequately rewarded. As part of its investigation into House staff retention, the Modernization Committee surveyed 21 House offices with the lowest staff turnover from 2001-2019 [2], a sample that included both Republican and Democratic offices, to learn from those offices that have seen success in their efforts to retain staff. An electronic survey was sent to the chief of staff in each office, and responses were received and tallied, without direct attribution, from 15 offices. The idea to ascertain best practices for staff retention and produce a report was presented to the Modernization Committee during a Member Day hearing in April. The survey results are included below.

"I suggest that...the committee identify these Members...and hold listening sessions with them to ascertain the best practices that they have used to produce remarkable staff retention rates. The committee can then generate and distribute a best practices report and provide that information to other Members."

-Hon. Hakeem S. Jeffries at Modernization Committee

Member Day Hearing

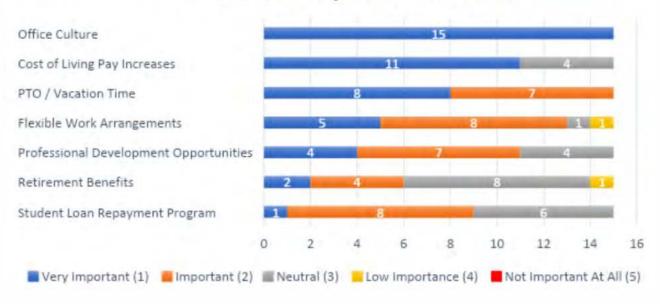
RESULTS PAGE 03



RESULTS

Survey respondents were asked to rate the retention value of existing benefits and policies on a 1-5 scale. Office culture was identified as being "Very Important [1]" to retention by all respondents. In follow-up responses, chiefs of staff identified various aspects of office culture as being particularly relevant to retention, including office communication, diversity within the office, and staff relationship with the member of Congress.





¹ Furnas, Alexander C., and Timothy M. Lapira. New America, 2020, pp. 44–47, Lessons for Congressional Capacity Reform, www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26360.7. Accessed 9 Sept. 2021.

² Offices were identified using a turnover index developed by Dr. Casey Burgat, director of the Legislative Affairs program at the Graduate School of Political Management.



THE SURVEY

Below are the five open-ended survey questions sent to offices with excerpted responses. The full list of responses is attached to this brief.

Question 1: Is there anything not listed [in the chart] above that you consider important for staff retention?

Responses generally touched on management style, office culture, professional development, and regular compensation increases beyond cost-of-living adjustments.

"Junior staffers do better work and stay longer if they get to present their work product directly to the Member. If senior staff does all the direct communication with Member, the Junior staffers will not feel they get credit."

"...having a diverse staff is helpful for retention, because it limits occasions when someone might feel like they're part of an out-group."





Question 2: Are there other benefits that are not currently offered that you believe would help with retention (for example tuition assistance)?

Responses included adding a tuition assistance benefit, establishing a more predictable Congressional calendar / work schedule, professional development, and increasing overall office resources (staff and budget).

"...a more predictable or stable voting schedule would help people balance work and life better and that would definitely help with retention."

"Decouple staff and member pay, increase FTE cap from 18 to at least 20 (capacity/burnout/volume is extreme challenge), more funds for paid interns and MRA/staff salaries." SURVEY PAGE 06

THE SURVEY



Question 3: What does your office do especially well that results in low staff turnover (for example, what are your vacation policies, how do you cultivate good management and leadership, etc.)?

Responses included individual office culture, management, and flexible work arrangements.

"I think our retention has mostly been about office culture, and it generally comes from the member's philosophy. We try to be open with staff about decision making and seek their input and also try to respect schedules, family life, and time off."

"We have a generous vacation policy (the longer you've been on the hill the more time off you earn per month) and we have a separate comp time policy that allows staff to earn an extra hour off for every hour they work beyond 8 hours a day."

"Rather than giving each staff member more annual leave (which most already don't use all of), we require all offices to "stand down" or close. Scheduling around federal holidays encourages staff to decompress/ travel/see family/ friends, etc."



THE SURVEY

Question 4: How does your office set expectations about career advancement and professional development?

Responses noted the importance of promoting from within when possible and providing meaningful opportunities for junior staff. Several responses mentioned using annual reviews as an opportunity to discuss career advancement.

"We do reviews every August and have frequent check ins with the team when there is a change in staff or an opportunity. Our goal is to communicate clearly and let them know that we want everyone to advance but since positions are limited, we try to think of unique ways beyond title changes - more issue area expertise for example or other things that can serve them in their careers down the road."

"We've been really supportive of team members taking graduate classes or applying to graduate programs by offering flexibility with their hours around class times or final exams. I've also encouraged people to take advantage of the training programs offered through the House and try to lead by example by participating when I can."



THE SURVEY

Question 5 What is your advice to other Member offices seeking to improve staff retention?

Responses pointed to the importance of hiring people that are likely to stay and those that are passionate about the work.

"To treat everyone on the team like the most valuable resource your office has and the only way for your Member to achieve success. Pay them as much as you can, focus on the atmosphere in the office so that it is a good place to go to work every day and look for ways you can help them grow even if their titles are staying the same."

"Hire good people who have a vested interest in the district/state and are passionate about creating public policy for the good of the country. Hire less campaign/political minded individuals and more who are interested in the legislative process."



CONCLUSION PAGE 09



According to research, staff remain in Congress <u>because</u> of the meaningfulness of the work, a desire to help people, and a dedication to public service but leave due to low compensation and the human resource infrastructure [3]. As shown by the bipartisan establishment of the Modernization Committee, the House is committed to improving staff retention to give members additional capacity to effectively serve their constituents.

Through Modernization Committee recommendations, as well as the work of the Chief Administrative Officer, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the House Administration Committee, and others, the House is on a path to improving staff retention by addressing staff pay, benefits, and human resources capabilities. While these additional resources are helpful, the above survey results also demonstrate that for those offices that have seen retention success, office culture is key. Ultimately, therefore, it is up to individual offices and managers to utilize the various tools and resources that are available to them to create a positive culture that attracts and retains talented staff.

In that vein, in the 117th Congress, the Modernization Committee recommended making more training available to managers on how they can develop a culture to retain staff. The Congressional Staff Academy also recently produced a <u>podcast</u> sharing staff retention tips and best practices.

The Modernization Committee will continue to investigate and develop recommendations for staff retention and ways to improve staff work-life balance. If you want to get involved, send us your ideas and use the contact page below to sign up to participate in one of our brown bag sessions with House staff.

³ Based on <u>Life in Congress</u> project (a collaboration by the Congressional Management Foundation and the Society for Human Resource Management.



APPENDIX A:

SCMC STAFFING-RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS 116TH AND 117TH CONGRESS

116th

- Creating a one-stop shop Human Resources HUB for Member, committee, and leadership staff.
- Making permanent the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
- Examining and updating the staff payroll system from monthly to semimonthly, regularly surveying staff on improving pay and benefits, and establishing a pay band system for House staff that includes a salary floor and average salary for each position in Member offices.
- Raising the cap on the number of staff in Member offices, delinking staff pay from Member pay, and establishing a new cap specific to staff.
- Providing institution-wide, standard onboarding training for new employees and offering staff certifications through the nonpartisan Congressional Staff Academy.
- Expanding access to health insurance for congressional staff and providing more financial stability for congressional staff enrolled in the federal student loan program.

117th

- Personalized Job Training & Management Skills: Supervisors should receive formal management training that includes management skills, cultural competency, and how to support an inclusive work environment.
- Real Time Payroll Information: The House should create a searchable database of anonymized average staff compensation information, by position, using available information on staff salaries and payroll data.



APPENDIX A:

SCMC STAFFING-RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS 116TH AND 117TH CONGRESS

117th, continued

- Personalized Job Training & Management Skills: Supervisors should receive formal management training that includes management skills, cultural competency, and how to support an inclusive work environment.
- Real Time Payroll Information: The House should create a searchable database of anonymized average staff compensation information, by position, using available information on staff salaries and payroll data.
- Mentorship Match Program: The House should initiate and facilitate a formal mentorship program for matching more experienced staff with less experienced staff.
- Professional Certifications: The House should allow Member, committee, and leadership offices to pay for certain professional development opportunities for staff that include a certification.
- Onboarding Information: The Chief Administrative Officer should provide offices with an expanded standard onboarding packet that includes comprehensive information on available resources and benefits for staff.
- Talent Acquisition Software: The Chief Administrative Officer should provide access to industry-leading talent acquisition software to assist House offices in managing their recruitment and hiring processes.
- Collecting Demographic Data: The Chief Administrative Officer should work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to improve the collection of anonymized demographic data through an optional form provided to staff at onboarding.



APPENDIX A:

SCMC STAFFING-RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS 116TH AND 117TH CONGRESS

117th, continued

- Assessing Intern Cost of Living: The Chief Administrative Officer should provide information to congressional offices on the cost of living for interns to help inform intern stipend levels.
- Intern & Fellowship Program Office or Coordinator: The House should establish an Intern and Fellowship Program Office or Coordinator that helps with onboarding, developing educational curriculum, professional development, and training for office coordinators.
- Fellows & Detailees Use of Equipment: Congress should clarify rules to allow fellows and detailees to receive the same resources as professional staff.
- Remote Internships: The House should study the feasibility of permanently allowing remote internships.
- Tuition Assistance: The House should expand the Student Loan Repayment Program to include tuition assistance.
- Update and Align Staff Benefits to Increase Retention: The House should establish and maintain a "Task Force on the House Workforce," led by the Chief Administrative Officer and comprised of other House offices to make ongoing policy recommendations on updating staff benefits.
- Assistance for Contract Employees: Where feasible, the House should work with contractors to ensure they provide their Capitol campus employees assistance services comparable to those offered by the House through the Office of Employee Assistance.

APPENDIX A PAGE 13



APPENDIX A:

SCMC STAFFING-RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS 116TH AND 117TH CONGRESS

117th, continued

- Supporting the Office of Employee Assistance: The Office of Employee Assistance should seek to retain a diverse workforce, offer access to bilingual services, and retain staff capable of providing various forms of trauma services.
- Committee Internship Stipends: Committees should be provided a program allowance, separate from their budget, for compensation of interns.

APPENDIX B, FULL SURVEY



Question 1

1

Is there anything not listed above that you consider important for staff retention?

Question 2

Are there other
benefits that are not
currently offered that
you believe would help
with retention (for
example tuition
assistance)?

Question 3

What does your office do especially well that results in low staff turnover? (for example, what are your vacation policies, how do you cultivate good management and leadership, etc)

Question 4

How does your office set expectations about career advancement and professional development?

Question 5

What is your advice to other Member offices seeking to improve staff retention?

No, but I would emphasize office culture. It is important for the manager to lead a team, and for everyone to know they are on a team. A team sports mentality is essential to happy staff.

Here's a suggestion. As a Member accrues seniority. they could have access to additional funds for staff that has served with them for a certain period. Maybe it could be like the non-MRA intern compensation fund. That would allow senior staff of senior Members to stay longer, as opposed to needing to leave in order to make more money. Regardless of one's ideology, staff with subject matter expertise, institutional memory, and the confidence of their boss makes a Member a much better public servant.

Communication is key. I talk often with everyone in the office, about almost everything. Everyone, from the staff assistant to the LD, generally knows why we make decisions, how we came to make those decisions, etc. Also I deliberately never call us "family". I remind everyone that they have a family and that comes first. So if someone is sick, or has a sick child, or a deceased cousin, or a graduating sibling, we accommodate them.

I tell everyone up front that I consider it a personal failing if they leave the office one day for a lateral move. I tell them I will do everything I can for them to make a vertical move in the office, but if there is a ceiling for them here. I will work to put them in a position for a vertical move to another office. I also encourage people, after they are settled in their position, to identify miniinitiatives that they are interested in having the boss tackle but that they themselves are very interested in. It could be a legislative angle or a caucus, or a seminar in the district. It gives the staff buyin, and as long as

there are benefits to the Member and district, I'm supportive. Communicate with everyone. Look for staff that don't have egos. Ambition is great, but an ego is toxic in a small office. Make sure everyone buys in to the concept of the work you do is incredibly serious, but you should not take yourself too seriously.

2	Member's personality and expectations also play outsized influence.	decouple staff and member pay, increase FTE cap from 18 to at least 20 (capacity/burnout/v olume is extreme challenge), more funds for paid interns and MRA/staff salaries	constant attention and focus on the team/morale, which includes one-on-one time with every staffer. My role as chief is to help ensure reasonable expectations and commitment to our shared strategic plan. we attempt to do mandatory down time each evening from 6-8PM when Member is not in DC AND have 4 mandatory all staff stand down days this year that are scheduled behind a federal holiday. rather than giving each staff member more annual leave (which most already dont use all of), we require all offices to "stand down" or close. scheduling around federal holidays encourages staff to decompress/travel/s ee family/friends, etc.	formal performance reviews in june of each year to have these conversations directly in a one on one setting, they are both backward and forward looking with specific attention to goals for the next year/five years.	soft management is the hardest, most time consuming aspect of my job - and possibly the most important.
3	The staff have created a team where it is a good work environment. People are treated like adults. They like coming into work and feel motivated about what we do.	I think that job titles should have salary floors. That way we could bring up the pay scale.	As a manager, I provide flexibility for my staff.	Generally, we promote from within.	Create a good environment where people want to work and promote people. Let staff have responsibility.
4	Not sure how to phrase it (or maybe it fits into the office culture), but having a diverse staff is helpful for retention, because it limits occasions when someone might feel like	Not really a benefit, but more a more predictable or stable voting schedule would help people balance work and life better and that would definitely help with retention.	We have a very good boss who sets the tone for the office at the top. We have high expectations, but work to make sure everyone understands the expectations and can meet the	We ask staffers about their goals during our annual performance reviews and work to make sure we incorporate their goals into their work plans. We try to foster an	The best investment you can make is in your staff so pay them more money if you like them and want to keep them. We eliminated most of our franked mail budget in favor of staff salaries.

they're part of an out-group. For example, if you have one Black staffer and the rest of the office is white, that's a daily burden for that one staffer. But if the entire office is diverse and no one feels like they're the only one of their group, it helps people feel more at home and comfortable at work.

And salary increases beyond just cost of living adjustments like pay raises after a series of good reviews, etc. expectations. We pay above average for each position. We have a generous vacation policy (the longer you've been on the hill the more time off you earn per month) and we have a separate comp time policy that allows staff to earn an extra hour off for every hour they work beyond 8 hours a day. We work hard to make sure we have a diverse staff that can work well together and learn

from each other.

environment
where staff can
come to their
Chief of Staff for
help applying for
jobs or taking
steps to advance
their career, even
if it means they
might leave our
office one day.

5

Junior staffers do better work and stay longer if they get to present their work product directly to the Member. If senior staff does all the direct communication with Member, the Junior staffers will not feel they get credit.

We stress culture and family in the office. We do not tolerate turf battles over issue areas and responsibilities. Staffers help each other willingly if others are out or need help.

We have an open door policy where staffers can discuss career advancement without worrying about any backlash. We discuss openly future promotion possibility and try to grant new responsibilities each year for younger staffers.

Create a welcoming and supportive environment. Do not require facetime in the office. Staffers can leave the office if they are done with work and do not need to remain just because the Member is around. Do your work in an excellent manner but if you do not have work, you should take time off, or an afternoon off, to recharge.

6

The ability to be promoted within the office.

And salary increases beyond just cost of living adjustments like pay raises after a series of good reviews, etc. Tuition assistance or any other ways to increase overall compensation.

We try to maintain a very fun, supportive and empathetic environment for our staff. We try to offer any perks that are allowed under House Ethics rules that includes opportunities to staff the "good" events and pay as high as our MRA can withstand. Additionally,

We do reviews every August and have frequent check ins with the team when there is a change in staff or an opportunity. Our goal is to communicate clearly and let them know that we want everyone to advance but since positions are limited, we try to think of unique

To treat everyone on the team like the most valuable resource your office has and the only way for your Member to achieve success. Pay them as much as you can, focus on the atmosphere in the office so that it is a good place to go to work every day and look for ways you

			our District Director and I work very hard to make each member of the team feel valued and important - so we take note of important life occasions, celebrate birthdays, and cheer everyone on as much as possible.	ways beyond title changes - more issue area expertise for example or other things that can serve them in their careers down the road.	can help them grow even if their titles are staying the same.
7	No	No	Office culture	Regular annual reviews for all employees and ongoing informal discussions.	Treat employees with respect, value their contributions and give them room to grow.
8	Not being a micromanager and clearly communicating expectations. Allow staff to make mistakes if they are pushing for betterment of the office or member	N/A	N/A	N/A	Communication and letting staff know expectations. Explain to junior staff the reasons why something is done and how it fits with the mission of the office.
9	Mutual respectcommon team goals.	A dependable Congressional calendar/work schedule.	Recognition of team work and individual intrinsic value.	Potential opportunities are discussed, as opposed to expectations.	Value personal responsibility.
10	No	I do think tuition assistance would help and also generally larger budget that would allow for better salaries for mid level staffers.	I think our retention has mostly been about office culture, and it generally comes from the member's philosophy. We try to be open with staff about decision making and seek their input and also try to respect schedules, family life, and time off. We	We check in monthly or bimonthly with staffers on how they are progressing in their goals and if their career goals have shifted. We move people up when we can within the office either with title or additional responsibility.	I think it's more about how you treat staff and make them feel a part of the team than pay and benefits, though obviously those things matter and help.

			also try to help them grow and reach their career goals, even if those are beyond our office.	We also ask them to be open about if they are looking elsewhere. Generally folks reach a ceiling in a congressional office eventually and I'd rather know and help people who are looking so I can plan for our office and don't expect them to stay on our team forever.	
	see below		We do office culture well and that seems to be the biggest driver. Twice a week video calls with DC/District staff helps build good office relationships. Giving staff lots of responsibility and leeway to get work done is helpful. One-on-one weekly meetings do great things for good communication. All of our team in DC is either from the district or [state], or lived in [the state] for a period of time, which makes the service personal to them.	Senior leadership is committed to the well-being, advancement, development of staff and we communicate that often.	Hire good people who have a vested interest in the district/state and are passionate about creating public policy for the good of the country. Hire less campaign/political minded individuals and more who are interested in the legislative process. Bring on team members who share values. Make goals clear. Over communicate. Treat people well. Don't overwork and under compensate and don't get too caught up in a DC mindset.
12	More than COLA, regular raises and bonuses are important to staff	Tuition assistance, hiring bonus, sabbatical(!)	emphasis on culture	(Hopefully) staff know that we're ready to invest in their development	Make sure the member cares about staff growth and development
13	I think it's important to give people autonomy w/in their lanes. Let people develop systems that work for them to	At the end of the day, I think it all comes down to paying more competitive salaries (even if that just means competitive	We don't micromanage our team. We try to make sure people are clear about what is expected of them, and then	We are weak in this area. The one thing we do well is provide people candid feedback. We lost two junior staffers about 6	Hire professional people and treat them like professionals.

across let them goals months into the government established by accomplish Congressman workers). management. those duties in taking office the way that because they they find to be both wanted to most suitable. IS move up. We this perfect? No. explained that There are there was no hiccups, but place for them nobody likes the to go in the feeling of current office someone structure, so looking over they left. But at their shoulder least we were all the time. honest. We offer 20 Nothing that would For those with It's important to Try to create a fall in the category need the tuition vacation days and me to know what culture where of a benefit. Digging assistance has allow 7 to roll our staffers want staff feel their into office culture a been helpful. I was over. They rarely to get out of these work is valued and bit more; I think all get used, so I've jobs and how it seen. Work hard to happy to see that access to the increased. For been more will benefit them ensure those without in the future. I do member is proactive about management is extremely important need I have less to engaging the staff twice yearly one approachable. to staff, as well as offer outside of on their time off on one sessions Show staff that you respect their meaningful the standard plans, and with each staffer opportunities to benefits, but don't identifying to provide a space time. Facilitate windows of time I contribute to high think there's for them to share team bonding anything obviously think will be challenges they priority projects. opportunities. People need to feel missing. quieter to help are having in their Offer exciting or their work is seen them feel better role and work unique and valued. I have heard from about taking time towards solutions. experiences to some staff it's off. I also ask if their each member of extremely are areas, within the staff (such as challenging to We've also been reason, they would when a VIP comes instituting all staff take advantage of like to be getting to the district) as the on campus comp days. It's more experience opportunities child care facility hard for some staff in, and talk present because the to disconnect through what's themselves. waitlist is so long. when their possible. Being able to have colleagues or the more options to member are accommodate working so giving everyone the time parents with young children off at once has when they need to been helpful. be in the office would be helpful. In terms of management I think communication and access are important. Every staffer in the office has some

platform each

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		with me and the member on their work flow, set goals, and troubleshoot issues.		
Office culture is a very broad term that can broken down into many categories, but I believe it's important to have an emphasis on the team values and shared goals which are set by the member.	Professional development (courses, trainings, etc) outside of the House programming Paying license fees and continuing education courses for staff with advanced degrees (JD, PhD, etc) Yearly COLA increase Tuition assistance for courses relative to work Child care assistance Other than employee benefits, I would love to see a more concerted effort to recruit diverse applicants to work on the Hill.	Good retention is the result of a thoughtful recruitment and hiring process. I believe the Congressman and I have taken a very deliberative approach to building a team that represents our core values and the diversity of the district. It has sometimes taken longer to fill open roles than would be ideal, but it's always been worth it to get it right.	We've been really supportive of team members taking graduate classes or applying to graduate programs by offering flexibility with their hours around class times or final exams. I've also encouraged people to take advantage of the training programs offered through the House and try to lead by example by participating when I can.	My number one piece of advice is to not rush the hiring process. Check in with your employees often (evaluations, reviews, etc.) so that you have an idea of their career goals and potential moves so that you can start the hiring and recruitment process for your office as early as possible. Always think of the office and the team holistically and consider where and when individuals could shift.

week to connect

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This year, the Modernization Committee is hosting virtual sessions with experts to discuss various topics in the Congressional reform and modernization space. These informal discussions are only available to Congressional staff and take place on Fridays at 11 a.m. during recess. To sign up to participate in these sessions please click here.

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- **→** Quick Tips for Effective Goal Setting
- **◄** Quick Tips for Delivering Performance Feedback
- **★** Healthy Teleworking Tips as a Manager
- ★ Healthy Teleworking Tips as an Employee
- **✓** Compassion Fatigue Tips

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? CONTACT:

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